

Urban Survival

*Who are the top tennis teacher
Los Angeles? What is the gay com-
munity like in Washington, D.C.? Wh
the best sportswriter in Texas? Is
cago's drinking water polluted?*

All of these questions have so
thing in common. They are asked—and
answered—by a lively gaggle of publi-
cations known as city magazines, a di-
verse, eclectic and sometimes unruly
group of enterprises to crowd under one
rubric. But most, whatever else they do,
aspire to be urban survival manuals,
guiding their readers toward the best
that city life has to offer while warning
them away from its pitfalls and dangers.
The genre is by and large prospering:
while magazines in general lost adver-
tising pages in 1975, city magazines as
a group increased their ads by some
1,100 pages over 1974, a gain of more
than 10%. In fact, four of the five U.S.
monthlies with the fastest growing ad-
vertising volume are city magazines.*

Most of the successful city maga-
zines have borrowed—some of them
heavily—from the graphics, format and
trendy chic of *New York* (circ. 364,000),
the pacesetter weekly first published as
an independent magazine by Clay Felker
in 1967. (Felker had been its editor
in an earlier and simpler incarnation,
when it was a Sunday supplement of the
now defunct *New York Herald-Tribune*.) Regular features akin to Felker's
"The Underground Gourmet" (budget-
minded restaurant reviews) and "The
Passionate Shopper" are staple fare, and
New York's penchant for parlor-game
lists ("The Ten Worst Judges," "The 100
Greatest Freebies in Town") has been
widely copied. Unlike *New York*, which
often ranges afield to cover events of na-
tional interest (last week's cover story
was a profile of Jimmy Carter), other
city magazines—all of them monthlies
—generally confine their efforts to local
stories. Among the best:

► *Texas Monthly* (circ. 185,000),
based in Austin, is a city magazine that
covers an entire state with an enthusi-
asm that reflects the youth of Publisher
Michael Levy, 29, and Editor William
Broyles, 31. Levy, a Wharton School of
business graduate who had practically
no journalism experience before starting
Texas Monthly, gave up the idea of con-
fining a magazine to Houston or Dallas
because neither city seemed likely to
provide a circulation of 100,000—the
minimum he felt he needed to succeed.
Instead, three years ago, he started a
magazine that would appeal to urban
dwellers anywhere in the state. "We like
to think we're writing about things that

that most sacred of cows, college foot-
ball. *Texas Monthly* has lacked original-
ity and punch in its graphics, but it has
become an articulate voice for the ris-
ing urban consciousness in the third
most populous state in the Union.

► *Chicago* (circ. 140,000) began life
24 years ago as *Chicago Guide*, a su-
permarket giveaway that listed radio
programs of the city's classical music
station, WFMT. In 1971, Publisher Ray-
mond Nordstrand, 43, who came to *Chi-
cago* from WFMT (he is still its station
manager), decided to add articles and
start selling the magazine to the public.
Since then it has become one of the fat-
test books in the country. Today, a typ-
ical 230-page issue carries more than 100
pages of advertising. Last year Nord-
strand dropped the "Guide" from *Chi-
cago's* title. But on the inside, *Chicago*
is still mostly a gray, though useful, land-
scape of listings that includes in a typ-
ical issue an index guide to 1,000-plus
local events, critiques of nearly 80 films,
as well as WFMT radio and public TV
listings. *Chicago* runs occasional pieces
of fiction and articles that cover every-
thing from the Mafia to houseplants in
a style that one reader describes as
"funky, chic lakeside journalism."

► *Philadelphia* (circ. 122,000) has
no peers among city magazines in in-
vestigative reporting. Among the imag-
inatively illustrated magazine's bigger
muckraking scoops: the revelation that
a *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter was
blackmailing banks and businesses by
threatening to give them bad publicity
(the reporter was suspended from the *In-
quirer* and eventually convicted), and an
exposé detailing how local politicians
had fouled up Philadelphia's Bicenten-
nial celebration by mismanaging funds
(as a result, the city restored to the wel-
fare fund \$500,000 that it had earlier di-
verted to the Bicentennial). *Philadel-
phia's* success is due to the unwavering
localism of Publisher Herbert Lipson,
46, who was a charter member of a
booster organization, Action Philadel-
phia, before taking *Philadelphia* over
from his father in 1961. "We wouldn't
do a piece on Jerry Ford," he says,
"unless it turned out he was born in
Philadelphia."

► *Los Angeles* (circ. 100,000), now
owned by a medical-book publisher, was
once eagerly sought by *New York's* Felker.
Los Angeles has developed over the
past 15 years into a smooth, narrow-for-

**Chicago*, *Los Angeles*, *The Washingtonian* and
Philadelphia. The fifth is *Southwest* magazine.